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AUTHOR Jackson, Miles M.
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ABSTRACT

Resource sharing through a consortium of libraries in the Pacific Islands is proposed as a practical means of meeting the needs of the Trust Territory for information for social and economic development. Not only is the cost of library materials going up at inflationary rates, but the population in the Trust Territory is becoming more educated, and the leadership is passing into the hands of young college trained people who will need special information for decision-making. A new political status which is only a few years away will serve to increase information needs. A consortium designed to supply information for those individuals who are actively involved in government administration, science and technology, and education and health, would need at least three components to function: legal basis, funding basis, and programs. The organization, activities, and benefits are described for a U.S. consortium, which would consist of American Samoa, Guam, Trust Territory of the Pacific, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, and Hawaii. An alternative to formalizing an interlibrary consortium for the Pacific Basin would be for the Trust Territory to work closely with Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas in a Micronesian consortium, with a back-up resource center in Hawaii at either the university or the state library. (JVP)

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THE TRUST TERRITORY AND A PACIFIC BASIN CONSORTIUM: A POINT OF VIEW

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Miles M. Jackson

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THE TRUST TERRITORY AND A PACIFIC BASIN CONSORTIUM: A POINT OF VIEW

by

Miles M. Jackson, Ph.D
Graduate School of Library Studies
University of Hawaii at Manoa

> Information has become the essential basis for the maintenance of a modern society at whatever stage of development it may be in. In fact, if they are to maintain social and economic progress, they will have to ensure integrated planning for these services. Effective public policy requires information, particularly in the fields of administration, statistics and economics.
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> Working Document of the Intergovernmental Conference on the Planning of National Documentation Library and Archives Infrastructures, 1974, UNESCO

Introduction

Since 1945 the Pacific islands have undergone both technical and cultural changes that have no doubt touched on most aspects of life. Perhaps the most significant changes have been caused by information and communications advancements. Certainly Micronesia has experienced the shock waves of change. There is concern among leaders of the Pacific islands about the quality of life and the well-being of their constituencies. Along with the desire for social and economic progress of the people and institutions there is concern about bringing libraries into the mainstream of government, education and research.

A United States Pacific Consortium

Resource sharing as a practical way for the Trust Territory to get into the act of using information more as an important part of social and economic development is one of the major themes of this paper. Other themes relate

to alternative ways of resource sharing. One of the more obvious ways of formalizing interlibrary cooperation in the Pacific Basin is through a consortium of libraries in the U. S. Pacific. There already exists an informal organization of multi national libraries which are communicating on a regular basis through PEACESAT and PILS (Pacific Information and Library Services) Newsletter. The U. S. consortium would consist of American Samoa, Guam, Trust Territory of the Pacific, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas and Hawaii. It would be a formal agreement among the individual libraries and/or governments for interlibrary cooperation. The consortium would need at least three components to function: (1) legal basis (2) funding basis and (3) Programs.

Legal basis is essential and would require each participant to agree on common objectives of the consortium. The creation of an agency that is a consortium "corporate body", that may or may not be chartered is the most likely or appropriate organizational approach.

Funding basis could be a combination of (1) membership and user fees (2) federal funding through either LSCA, Higher Education Act or from the private sector in the form of gifts and grants.

Programs could include not only (1) sharing of resources such as information found in documents, data and other forms of recorded knowledge, but (2) an education and training program. Training programs could consist of short term training courses or workshops given via PEACESAT and on-island sessions. The assistance of local colleges and universities could be utlized in coordinating and co-sponsoring workshops. (3) Publications conceivably could be generated and consist of manuals, catalogs, etc. (4) Procurement intermediary for purchasing and acquiring library materials,

either in Hawaii or from the mainland; (5) Consultative assistance could be provided through request from librarians or officials in government; (6) Regional bibliography of consortium participants.

How Will a Pacific Basin Consortium Help Trust Territory Libraries?

In 1977 there were over 39,000 new books published in the United States alone. It is virtually impossible for any one library today to acquire all of the books published in any one year. In fact, there is probably no need for any single library to acquire all of the books published in 1978. However, this does not mean there has been a decline in the need for information. Throughout the nation there has been a steady increase in demand for information, not only among scientists and administrators, but from the general population. Smaller and less affluent communities in the general population have their own information needs. In the case of the Trust Territory, fulfilling library and information needs of the latter group will probably be best met through local library resources. Since their needs will, in most instances, be personal. Understanding information needs of the general population is crucial for successful delivery of library services.

The consortium would have its greatest meaning for those individuals who are actively involved in (a) government administration (b) science and technology and (c) education and health.

Government Administration. This includes a wide range of activities that would go on almost on a daily basis in the Trust Territory. There are legal and socio-economic affairs, and scientific and technical applications which are related to some aspects of development. Despite the fact that the Trust Territory government organization is on a smaller scale and with less intensity than government in Hawaii, there still is need for information.

This information could very well be for social or economic data stored in computerzied data bases in Honolulu or for that matter in a government documents collection in Agana.

Science and Technology. Despite the levels of research in science and technology in the Trust Territory there is almost certain to be some concern about the natural and physical environments. No doubt there is need for information in agriculture, fisheries, forestry and other related fields. Resource sharing potentially could come from any of the participating agencies. But Hawaii would have the largest resource, including access to large stores of agriculture and scientific information stored in computers. These computerized systems could be searched for the Trust Territory in the same way searching is done for the Department of Tropical Agriculture at the University of Hawaii.

Education and Health. It is conceivable that libraries serving educational institutions on all levels would benefit from an interlibrary consortium. This is especially true as it relates to needs of educational planners and researchers from elementary school through the Community College of Micronesia. At the University of Hawaii, the Hamilton Graduate Research Library has access to the huge ERIC computerized data base. Requests for literature searching in education and related fields could be broadcast via PEACESAT. Requests received in Honolulu could be given to the Graduate School of Library Studies for the computer search. Print-outs could be mailed to Saipan within a two-week period.

The National Library of Medicine's data base of medical literature could be computer searched for medical specialists in the Trust Territory by the University of Hawaii. This is not a discussion of an impossible

technological dream because the technology is available. The satellite radio contacts and the National Library of Medicine's data base are used daily in Honolulu.

Alternatives for the Trust Territory: A Micronesian Library Consortium (MICLICON)

One alternative to formalizing an interlibrary consortium for the Pacific Basin would be for the Trust Territory to work closely with Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas. It is conceivable and would be practical to establish a Micronesian consortium that could include (1) a joint acquisition program (2) training programs at the University of Guam with workshops being held at such places as Saipan, Palau and Agana and; (3) better communication because distances are not as great between Saipan and Agana as they would be between Pago Pago, Honolulu and Saipan. An agency in Hawaii, either the University of Hawaii or the State Library, could be contracted to serve as back-up resource center for the Micronesian Library Consortium. One could study a similar interlibrary cooperative in the English-speaking Caribbean. The Caribbean has a similar geographical spread as Micronesia as well as problems related to transportation, communications, lack of library development and fluctuating economies.

Trust Territory Going it Alone

If the above alternatives do not seem reasonable then the final alternative for the Trust Territory is to go it alone. The Territory is already going it alone and this is not advisable for too much longer for the following reasons:

(1) The cost of library materials are going up at inflationary rates;

(2) The population in the Trust Territory is becoming more educated;

(3) Leadership in the Trust Territory is passing into the hands of young college trained people who will have to depend on special information for decision-making. Most already appreciate the value of having access to information;

(4) A new political status for the Trust Territory is only a few years away. Now is the time to plan for a formalized information system to serve government and the people.

Finally, it should be noted that to go it alone implies that the Trust Territory will provide the money, resources and people needed to run a modern library and information system. Entering into a cooperative arrangement with other libraries would make matters much simpler.

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